Lucky Number Seven by backdrop

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Summary: "Oh yeah," Allison says loudly, grinning, "Lydia's a massive James Bond fan. I've seen the tattoo." Stiles nearly spills his drink. OR: In which Lydia Martin has a small tattoo on her inner wrist and a stick of concealer to hide it with, but some people see it anyway. ONESHOT.

Lucky Number Seven

AN: Idk where this came from but yolo I guess?

Now

"Oh yeah," Allison announces loudly, pulling a DVD out of the pile, "Lydia's a massive James Bond fan."

It was Saturday night. Scott and Stiles (but mostly Stiles) had declared it was time for a movie night because they were all being "a bunch of fucking downers" and it was time to liven up. They're piled into Lydia's room and still trying to pick a movie almost an hour later. The initial debate of Princess Bride against some television show Lydia had never heard of had been totally derailed when Erica and Boyd had shown up with a bag of bottles and cans. When Allison spoke, however, Stiles looked absolutely delighted and twisted around from his spot at the foot of the bed between Isaac's feet and Scott so fast he nearly spilled his glass.

"Really?"

"Excuse me," Lydia protests.

"Don't deny it!" Allison sings, eyes sparkling and already three drinks deep. "I've seen your tattoo!"

"I do not!"

"Tattoo?"

"Shut up, Stiles!" Lydia snaps, forcing herself not to panic or overreact. "You were sworn to secrecy, Allison!" It doesn't matter if they see it, she tells herself, no one knows it for what it is anyway. At least Allison looks guilty now. Also, now that Lydia's basically just confirmed that she does have a James Bond tattoo, the Great Movie Debate is instantly forgotten and room erupts into questions.

"It's real?"

"Can I see it?"

"How long have you had it?"

"Where is this tattoo?" Erica leans in with a leer.

Scotland meets Lydia's eyes and grimaces sympathetically, but doesn't say anything. She always knew McCall was her favourite. Lydia sighs but extracts herself from her place on the bed, pulls out a makeup remover wipe and thinks, well they were going to notice it eventually.

"Happy now?" Lydia asks incredulously, but she's almost smiling.

The gang crowd toward her to get a better view, and sure enough, there it is. Small and almost invisible on her inner wrist are the numbers from everyone's favourite British spy movie.

007.

Twelve years ago

Seven gets woken up by an electronic hum as the lights flash on and the door crashes open. She scrambles back and nearly falls off the bed in shock but then Papa is there, smiling at her.

"Good morning," he says as he enters. He walks over to the bed when she sits up, and pats her cheek lightly. "Are you ready?"

Seven nods silently and crosses her hands in her lap. Even if she says no she'll be going anyway. Without another word, Papa walks away and she scrambles off the bed to follow him. This routine is old now, and she knows where she's going.

Five minutes later, she's sitting in a white chair in front of a white table in a white room, and the doctors have put the headset back over her ears. One of them pulls at her hair, makes a dissatisfied noise, then looks at her father.

"It's getting long again, she's gonna need another cut."

"It will get taken care of," Papa says, and then they are left alone. He takes the seat opposite her, sitting back from the table. Seven doesn't say a word as he picks up the top card from the stack that is face

down on the table between them. Each one is the size of both her hands held flat next to each other, and Papa looks at the shape on it without letting her see.

"What's on the card, Seven?" He asks.

It's a game they play, that they've been playing for as long as she remembers. The rules are: she is not allowed to see the card, and she has to answer as quickly as possible. There are five different things that could be on the card (different shapes; a circle, a square, a triangle, a rectangle, or a block like a T.)

Seven licks her lips quickly, and stares at the card. She has no idea. She never knows what's on the cards, but Papa insists she guesses anyway. "Square."

Papa picks up the next card, and his face doesn't tell her if she got it wrong or right.

"Circle," she says, because she has to answer. Her voice is dry and crackly, and it sticks in her throat. The lights are buzzing like the insect that had been in her room two days ago.

"Triangle. T. Square. Triangle."

They play this game for thirty minutes several times every week and she still doesn't know why, but it's her favourite game if she had to choose. They don't need any blood tests for this game, or wires, and her nose only bleeds a little afterwards. A few days ago she'd woken up in her room with blood all over her face and her head feeling like it was going to split open, and she couldn't remember the game at all but Papa had said she'd done well.

Once all the cards have been played, the doctors come in and pull off the headset. While they're fussing around her she asks, "Papa?"

He smiles at her and his eyes look just as grey flat as the steel door. "You did well today," he tells her, and she's not sure if she believes him but is relieved anyway. "Lucky number Seven," Papa says, and then she's being swept off by a woman in a white uniform who's going to cut her hair.

Seven wraps her hand around her skinny wrist, puts a thumb on the mark there. Lucky number Seven.

Eight months ago

"Guess what I have here."

A bag appears in front of Lydia's face and she jumps. Allison pulls the bag back and sits facing her.

"Two cheesy movies and a bag of m&m's," Lydia replies blandly, then goes back to texting. It's girls night and Erica is late. There's a moment of silence, and when she looks up again Allison is giving her a strange look.

"Well, that was creepy," Allison says, then laughs and tips over the bag. "Scott called ahead again?" Slipping out of the bag onto the bed are two DVD boxes and a packet of chocolates. Lydia forces herself to laugh as well then goes along with the excuse.

"Sorry," she says, voice carefully light. She picks up one of the movies. "I like this one though," Lydia says, holding it out. Her other hand holds the towel wrapped around her head that she'd put in place getting out of the shower almost thirty minutes ago.

"Nice," Allison says, and sticks the movie into her laptop. She mutters something about Scott that sounds full of violent promises, then rips open the bag of chocolates and throws one at her. Lydia smirks when she manages to catch it but Allison's attention has been diverted.

"Oh my god!" She leans in and grabs Lydia's wrist, flipping it over, "Is this a tattoo?"

Time stops, her pulse roars in her ears, and Seven is a child again. Papa grabs her wrist harshly and shakes it, wrenching her arm, shouting at her while blood drips into her mouth and

"-dia? Lydia!"

She forces herself to focus, take a breath, and tries to switch her brain back on. Allison still has the ghost of a smile but she looks worried. Shit, Lydia thinks, and grabs the first excuse that comes to mind.

"I was drunk!" She hisses, trying to look less petrified and shooting a glance at her bedroom door like she's worried someone will overhear. Allison takes the cue, thank god, and lowers her voice.

"You got a drunk tattoo?" She whispers it like it's the most insane, incredible, unlikely thing she's ever heard. "You got a tattoo that says 007 when you were drunk?"

She lets go of Lydia's wrist and leans back, laughing. Lydia tries not to look too relieved, and whips her hand back, holding it to her chest while she forces a laugh.

"I was fifteen," she lies, grinning. "I regretted it immediately and now I keep it covered." She pins Allison with a pleading look. "Please don't tell anyone. Especially Stiles, you know how he'd react."

Allison still looks highly entertained by this apparent glimpse into Lydia's past, but grimaces at that. "Yeah, you're right. Don't worry about it."

Lydia raises an eyebrow. "Promise?"

"My lips are sealed!" Allison says, and Lydia smiles. She wills her heart to slow down.

"Can I just ask - ?"

"No."

Eleven years ago

One day, Seven wakes up when the lights are still off. The room is pitch black around her, but Seven is still half asleep and remembers her dream. A woman had sat on the side of the bed she was lying in, put her hand on Seven's cheek like Papa did. She was smiling, but it was a different smile; when Papa smiled it was because he was pleased, like when Seven wins a game or completes a task without getting a headache. This woman smiled softly, and her eyes were soft as well. She had been talking in the dream, but Seven couldn't remember what she had said. All she could remember was a flash image of the woman leaning over and smiling, long hair falling around her face.

Seven was rubbing her hands over her face and wishing she could go back to sleep when the lights buzzed on and the door crashed open, and Papa was there again.

Today, he says, they are going to try a new game.

"I'm going to explain how the game works," Papa says while the men in white cover Seven in wires and monitors. "You remember how to play the card game." It isn't a question, so Seven doesn't say anything. "To understand this new game, I'm going to tell you more about the card game."

Then Papa tells her that she has never ever told him the right shape when he has held out a card for her. It upsets her terribly, because she knew she'd just been guessing, but never? She wrings her hands in her lap and stays quiet.

"But," Papa says, and she looks back up. "We made a list of the order we put the cards in, and a list of what you told us, and you know what we found out?" He says it like a question, but somehow she knows not to speak. "You never once told me what was on the card I was holding, Seven, but what you did tell me," Papa leans forward, "was the shape that would be on the next card I picked up."

Seven stares at him.

"It's like you were playing a round ahead of me," Papa says. "And when we adjusted the lists by one place, you were right every time. Do you understand?" Seven licks her lips and shakes her head. "It means you were telling me what cards I was going to pick up before I even touched them." There is a moment of silence while Seven tries to understand.

"This new game is going to be like the card game," Papa tells her, before she's even had a chance to wrap her head around the fact that she'd apparently been predicting cards ahead of time the whole time. "But it's going to be harder. Instead of holding up a card, I'm going to tell you a story, and you're going to tell me what happens next. Are you ready to play?"

Three months ago

Scott is the second person that notices Lydia's tattoo, and it happens when they're walking to Deaton's Clinic and she grabs him by the back of his jumper and yanks him off his feet backwards. She does it instinctively, and for a split second even she doesn't know why she's done it, but then she hears screaming tires and a car skids around the corner. The back of the car scrapes around and jumps up onto the curb, flying right through the space Scott had been walking through half a second before while he talked a mile a minute about something Allison had told him about archery the night before.

The car doesn't stop or even slow down, and Lydia tugs at her sleeve nervously because Scott had nearly been turned into werewolf paste on the street in front of her, but then she sees the expression on his face. Lydia laughs and offers him a hand where he's almost lying on the pavement beside her.

"I thought you were meant to be the one with amazing hearing and magical reflexes. You didn't hear that coming?"

Scott laughs nervously and let's her help him up even though he definitely doesn't have to.

"Nice save," he says, smiling at her. Then he ruins it by asking, "When did you get a tattoo?"

Lydia glances down, and obviously at some point during the yanking and the fidgeting and the fast insanity of the last minute her sleeve has ridden up and the number on her wrist was in full view.

"Oh, a while ago," she says casually, pulling her sleeve back down to cover it. "I got drunk and made some questionable choices, and one of those was a James Bond tattoo." If the excuse worked on Allison it would work on Scott, and she might as well keep the story consistent. "And if you tell anyone about it," Lydia carries on carelessly, "Next time I'll let the car turn you into soup. Got it?"

They start walking again, and Scott is bemused but good naturedly swears not to tell. Lydia muffles a sigh of relief; Scott McCall is nothing if not honest, and if he says he won't tell she trusts him.

"What kind of arrows was Allison using?" She prompts, and just like

that his attention is successfully diverted away from the numbers on her wrist again. Lydia sighs, and pulls her sleeve down to her knuckles.

Nearly nine years ago

The part of her week Seven looks forward to most is the rainbow room.

There used to be three of them in there – her, Eight, and Four, – but the older one, Four, had disappeared a few months ago and hadn't been seen since. Papa wouldn't tell her or Eight anything about it, and for a while it had been just the two of them.

Then, Seven had been walked to the rainbow room and Eight had been in there with a new child.

"This is Eleven," Eight told her, because Eleven was too small to say anything.

So for a while it was back to three of them together, but Seven hadn't been to the rainbow room for almost a month. She had been put in the dark place five times in the last four weeks and she's back in there again now, crouched in the pitch black with her face in her hands. She was covered in tears and snot and blood and she'd messed up the task Papa had set her, and even though part of her felt like screaming and crying, another new part of her was very very quiet and very very calm.

Something was about to happen.

The quiet calm slid over her like ice water, and Seven stood up in the dark place. She reached out with one hand, and stopped when she felt the door, then pressed herself against the wall and waited.

She waits in the dark until she heard heavy footprints, and the calm twists and settles in her chest. Seven closes her eyes and makes a fist and –

The door to the dark place opens and light rushes in, turning her vision red behind her eyelids, and Seven strikes. There's a crunch and something snaps in her hand, but she opens her eyes and darts out

into the corridor.

A man is lying on the floor, and his partner reaches for her. The calm twists again and Seven follows it, hopping sideways and ducking under the arm, snatching his card. She slides around the corner, bounces off the wall and starts to run.

Seven hardly makes a sound, bare feet hardly touching the ground as she flies through the facility, ducking and twisting around the people who grab at her. It feels like they're moving too slowly, like she can see how they're moving and knows exactly how to avoid them. Later, Seven will make the connection between her bizarrely easy escape (how did no one catch her? How did she know the way?) and the card games she played with Papa.

She spends four days hiding in trees and running though rivers and breaking into buildings before she gets caught – luckily not by Papa, but by the people who lived in the house she had walked into. When they ask her who she is and where her family are, Seven looks at them quietly and thinks about her dreams of the woman with brown hair and the nice smile and felt a strange certainty.

The next day, wearing clothes that fit and holding a bag with a sandwich, Seven is on a bus.

Nine years ago

Lydia Martin finally gets her name when she is eight years old, and it is given to her by the smiling woman she had dreamed about, who is her mother. Afterwards Seven sits cross legged on her new bed that's too soft and thinks about it, whispering it to herself. Lydia Lydia Lydia. It's a good name, she decides, liking the ee sound and the way she flicks her tongue for the Lydi.

When the woman who had become Natalie Martin opened the door at 7.20pm on a Thursday night she hadn't known what was coming, but she had taken one look at the child on her doorstep and almost fallen over. It had been four years since she had given up on finding her daughter and taken even longer to get away from Hawkins with a new name. But now, staring at the child in front of her who looked like the childhood photos of Natalie's own mother, Natalie has a

moment of absolute clarity and pulls the girl into the house.

It takes Natalie a long time to get used to the new resident in her home, a long time to get used to Lydia's strangeness and quietness, but it also takes her a long time before she can bear to let the girl out of her sight in case she vanishes again. Within days of Seven's arrival, Natalie has sold her house and packed them each a bag and done her best to make them both disappear.

It also takes Lydia a long time to learn how to simply live as the child she is, or as close to that as she can manage. And Lydia wants to learn everything.

It takes a long time for Lydia to develop a sense of self, developing a personality for herself, exploring herself in ways she had never been allowed to before. Natalie realises quickly that Lydia has absolutely no concept of gender or femininity but she sits back and lets Lydia figure it out. At first Lydia grows her hair long just because she can, wears dresses because she likes how brightly coloured they are (except on the days they remind her of the shapeless gowns she used to wear, when she would choose trousers instead.)

The older she gets, the more she learns about living as a human rather than a number.

Lydia spent almost seven years living in an empty room with no toys, no clothes, and no hair. As a teenager she hasn't cut her hair since she left except to trim and she wears it differently every day. She reads countless tutorials in the magazines her mother lets her buy, and learns to braid her hair eight different ways and wrap it around her head in a dozen different styles. Her room is covered in colours; she paints the walls and covers them in drawings and posters, puts lights around her bed and around the table.

After seven years of sterile hospital gowns and white sheets she is delighted that her hair grows out vividly red. Her nails change colour every week. She paints her face every morning, lips a different colour, eyelids shaded with almost surgical precision. Although she started using makeup out of curiosity more than compulsion, she learns quickly that it serves a dual purpose. She starts putting a heavy coat of concealer and powder over the marks on her wrist and carries

them with her - and who would question a sixteen year old girl for carrying makeup with her?

Sometimes the concealer doesn't feel like enough and she looks at the tattoo on her wrist, a constant reminder, and she wants to cut it off, take a chunk of her arm out, just get rid of it. On those days she wears long sleeves and long gloves and sits up late with Natalie (with mum) and they eat chocolate and watch movies and talk about birds, or read books and talk about the stars and maths and science and why the clouds move.

They are a small family and it takes them time, but Natalie and Lydia rediscover their lives when they move to Beacon Hills and maybe that's enough for now.

Now

Lydia holds her arm out to her friends, tattoo visible. With her other hand she takes Stiles' drink before he can spill all of it over her bed, and downs it without acknowledging his mock outrage.

Scott leaps up and declares a rock/paper/scissors contest to decide the movie once and for all, and declares that they have to focus on what's really important. Stiles and Erica are instantly distracted by the challenge, and Scott grins at Lydia. He really is her favourite.

She slides back onto the bed, crammed between Isaac and the wall, and pulls her cardigan sleeve back down. Stiles turns on her and demands a rock/paper/scissors match, and Lydia smirks when she accepts. Maybe it's cheating and maybe it reminds her uncomfortably of Papa's card game, but she's never lost that game in her life.

End.

AN: timeline: honestly the timeline is only rough in my brain but Lydia gets taken from her mother when she's about a year old? in Hawkins lab for about 7 years, escapes around age 8. 'Now' Lydia is 17. Also yes I use British spelling because I threw up this whole thing in a few hours at 4am a few days ago and I've only proof read it once, I don't have the energy sorry lol. I know it's a bit clumsy and disconnected but yolo I guess, I hope you enjoyed it anyway